This file is part of the document FECFile UserManual for PAC's & Party Committees. To learn more about the Federal Election Commission, the Electronic Filing Program, or find the other parts of this document follow the following links, respectively:

FEC HOME > ELECTRONIC FILING > FECFIle USER MANUAL



FECFile User Manual for PAC's & Party Committees

This manual is designed to help political committees use FECfile software and to assist with the filing of disclosure reports. The format is user-friendly and contains step-by-step instructions, along with screen shots, in an effort to help users maneuver through the software. Some of the areas found in this manual include: How to enter transactions on each line, How to upload a report, How to file a miscellaneous electronic submission, and How to make sense of some common error codes.

Edition date

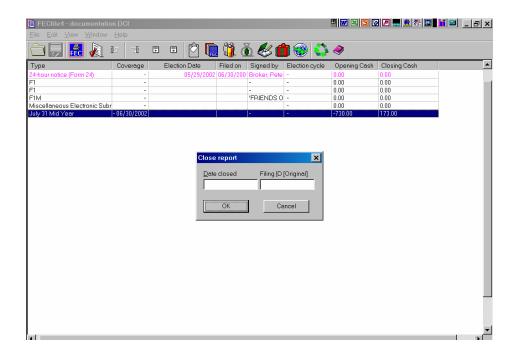
10/11/02

Author

Data Systems Training and User Support

Contact information

Phone: 1-800-424-9530 or local Washington, D.C. 202-694-1100 Reports Analysis Division—Reporting Questions NIC—Technical Questions



File Submission

When all transactions have been entered for a report, and the deadline for reporting is imminent, the final details must be collected in order to file electronically. There are several different ways a user may file, and with detailed information following.

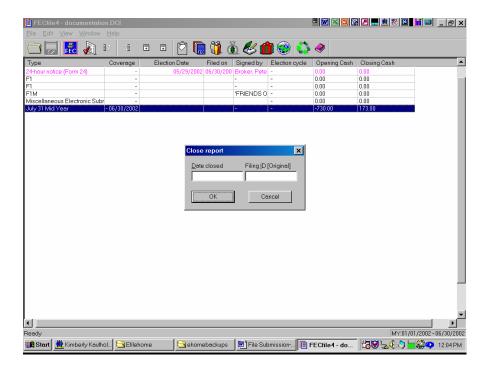
Filing Requirements

The user must have an FEC electronic filing password. This is REQUIRED. They must contact the FEC electronic filing office if they do not have a password, or if it has been forgotten.

The user must have a modem and phone line connection for dial up, or a network connection to the Internet.

(When no other option is available, filing on diskette is an option).

The report must pass validation.



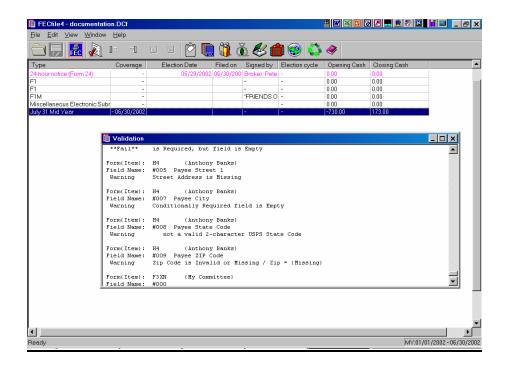
Signing and Dating the Report

If the report is not properly signed and dated, the validator will note that the information is missing and generate Level 12 (serious level) errors, and uploading will not be possible. If the report is not ready to actually upload, but want to validate it, the user may want to leave the report date blank.

To "sign" and date the report, select **Close Report** from the edit menu or right click on the report to close in the **Reports window**. This can only be done with the Reports View active.

Enter the actual date the report will be filed in the **Date closed** field.

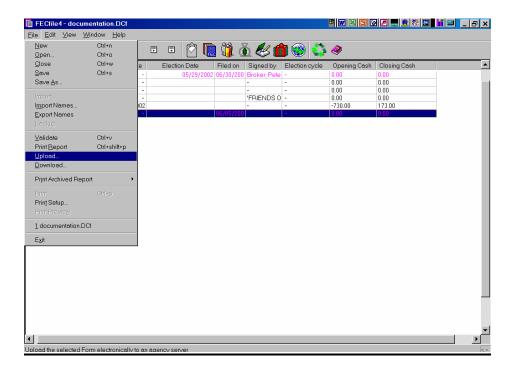
The **Filing ID** is only used for amendments, and should be blank for new reports. For amended reports, the filing number of the report being amended should already be displayed.



Validation

The validation process identifies errors and omissions in the report. It does not evaluate the filing for correct reporting practices, but sends an alert for missing information, such as employers and occupations, or failure to designate a signatory for the report.

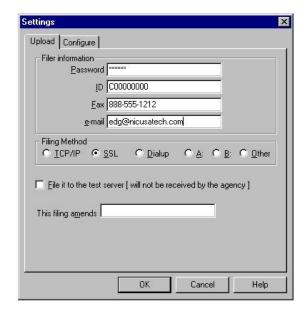
 To validate the report, select validate from the File menu or click on the Validator button on the toolbar. Once the errors reported by the Validator have been resolved, the application is prepared to close and upload the report.



Uploading the Report Via TCP/IP/Internet

To begin the upload process:

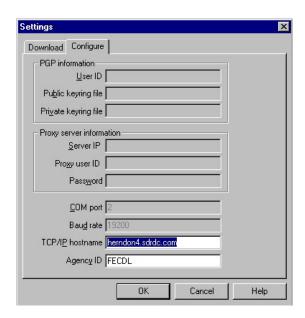
- 1. Choose Upload from the File menu, or click on the Upload button on the tool bar.
 - If the report has not been validated, the upload process automatically runs the validator.
 - If errors are found that are level 8 or higher, the user will not be allowed to upload the report.
 - If errors are found that are below level 8, a warning message appears on the screen that notifies the user of the errors and asks if the user wishes to continue. It is advisable to correct as many of the errors as possible before filing.
- 2. If no errors are found, or the user indicates that they wish to file the report with errors, the Upload Settings screen appears.



- 3. The Password is required and must be obtained from the FEC electronic filing office.
- The ID is the committee ID which should be reflected, based upon the Lookup file installed.
 However, if not, enter the 9 digit committee ID (starting with "C00").
- A Fax number and/or Email address is required. This will permit the user to receive confirmation that the report has been received by the FEC. If the user enters both, they will receive both a fax and an email.
- 6. The TCP/IP option sends the report to the Commission via the Internet. This is the simplest way to send the report if connected to the Internet and no security measures are in place that would prevent the user from uploading via the Internet. The configure tab has information the software uses to communicate with the FEC electronic filing system. The TCP/IP host name should be fecef1.sdrdc.com (all lower case), and the Agency ID should be FEC (all upper case). The software defaults to these settings. If settings are changed, they must be reset to the defaults in order to upload the report properly.

Dialup Option

The Dialup option utilizes a direct modem-to-modem communication between the users computer and the FEC electronic filing system. It is slightly less convenient than TCP/IP because it requires some special information on the configuration tab that may not be readily available, as seen below. This option can be used for filers who have no Internet connection or those who have special firewall or proxy server restrictions against uploading files via the Internet.



SSL

This option also sends the user's report to the Commission via the Internet. The SSL option allows users that are behind a firewall or proxy server to file their report securely. They may need assistance from their network administrator in order to use this option. The configure tab has information the software uses to communicate with the FEC electronic filing system. The https host name should be https://herndon6.sdrdc.com/cgibin/disclose ssl/upload (all lower case), and the Agency ID should be FEC (all upper case). The software defaults to these settings. If they are changed, they must be reset to the defaults in order to upload the report. The user's Network administrator can supply them the proxy server information.

Diskette (A: or B:)

If, for whatever reason, the Internet or a phone line is not available, the reports may be submitted on diskette.

- 1. Insert a blank diskette in the diskette drive and select A: or B:, whichever is correct for the applicable computer.
- 2. Select OK.

The Diskette should be mailed **along with a signed summary page** to the FEC. Diskette filings require an actual signed summary page because there is no way to transmit the password via diskette.

NOTE: Diskette filings are subject to the same deadlines as paper filings!

Other

The other option allows the user to specify a specific directory on their computer to create a copy of the report.

Filing to a Test Server

Test reports can be filed using **Dialup**, **TCP/IP** or **SSL**. The test-filing server is a duplicate of the actual server. The purpose of test filing is to verify that the user can use the chosen method to file the actual report.

TEST FILING WILL SIMULATE THE LIVE FILING ENVIRONMENT. FILING A TEST REPORT IS FOR DIAGNOSTIC PURPOSES ONLY. TEST FILING OF REPORTS WILL NOT FULFILL THE FILING REQUIREMENTS IN ANY CASE. THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION WILL NOT SEE REPORTS FILED TO THE TEST SERVER. THE TEST REPORT WILL EVENTUALLY BE DELETED FROM THE TEST SERVER.

Additional information about filing test reports is available from technical support.

Proxy Server information

Allows the user to configure FECload to file reports through a proxy server. The user's network administrator can supply the *server id*, *proxy user id*, *and password*.

COM port

The *Com port* setting defaults to port 2. This is the most common port used by modems. If the user's modem does not use com port 2, they may change it to the correct com port.

Baud rate

The default *Baud rate* is 19200. This is an indication of the speed with which the modem transfers data. It can be set to match the connection speed but not set higher.

Dialup string

The *Dialup string* is a series of letters followed by a phone number. This information is passed to the user's modem to enable it to connect with the FEC modem pool.

Agency ID

This information is used to direct the filing to the proper part of the electronic filing system. The default entry is FEC. There is no need to edit this entry.

During the Filing Process

When OK is selected, the file is uploaded to the FEC electronic filing server. On the screen a series of messages appears detailing what is occurring. If at any point during the process, something is found to be incorrect, the process will be terminated and the word *FAILED* will appear at the bottom of the screen.

The most common failures are:

- incorrect passwords (The password IS case sensitive) and
- uploading without first connecting to the Internet (TCP/IP only). If the upload process generates a FAILED message at any point, call Tech Support.

If the password is correct, and there are no other reasons to reject the file (the Validator usually eliminates most other problems), the last line of the message is *Succeeded*. At this point the user is notified that the file has been received by the FEC.

This does not mean that the file has been accepted!

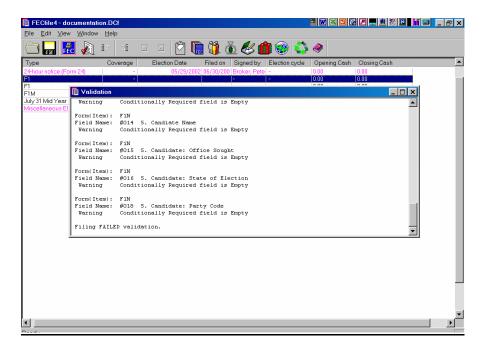
If the file is accepted, the user receives a fax or email within a few minutes notifying them that the filing was accepted. If they do not receive this notification, they should call the electronic filing office immediately.

When the user receives notification they will recognize it as the same printout that the validator provided. It should in fact be nearly identical. The MD5 Checksum number should match exactly.

Example:

The only difference between this notification and the one printed from the validator is the addition of a block of information about filing date and time and a Filing ID number. This number is assigned when the report is received and it is important. If it is found find that the report must be amended, the user must provide the Filing ID of the report. The Filing Id is automatically saved inside the user's file, after they upload. They may look up the Filing Id by activating the Reports View, Selecting Edit, and clicking Close Report. There is a field that will hold the Filing Id of the report.

NOTE: The Faxed or emailed receipt is the official receipt and should be kept just as the user would keep a certified mail receipt. This is proof that they filed the report.



Interpreting Validation Error Codes/Description of the Validator Program

A committee will receive two types of validation error codes when mistakes are made or omissions are present in the report, Warning and Fail.

- The Fail message will not allow the committee to file the report, automatically until the errors are corrected.
- The Warning message will only cause a report to fail if the committee has 10,000 errors, or more.

The Fail indicator will look like the following in the Validator printout:

Form{Item}: SB23

Field Name: #002 FEC Committee ID Number **Fail** is Required, but the field is Empty

Form{Item}: identifies the schedule and line on which the Fail entry occurs. In this case the error occurs on Schedule B supporting Line 23 of the Summary Page.

Field Name: identifies the aspect of the transaction that is in error.

Fail identifies the failure. In this example the committee's identification number was not supplied.

The Warning indicator will look like the following in the Validator printout:

Form{Item}: SA11A1 {Smith^John^^} Field Name: #009 Contributor ZIP Code

Warning Zip Code is Invalid or Missing / Zip = {Missing}

Form{Item}: identifies the schedule and line on which the Warning entry occurs. In this case the error occurs on Schedule A supporting Line 11(a) of the Summary Page.

Field Name: identifies the aspect of the transaction that is in error.

Warning: identifies the warning. In this example the zip code is missing.

Other Errors

"FEC Committee ID Number is required, but field is empty" error

When a committee finishes their report, they must run the Validator program. Committees may then receive the following error message: "FEC Committee ID Number is required, but field is empty." This will prevent the committee from uploading its report. The problem can be fixed by the following steps:

- 1) Instruct the committee to open FECFile (but not any particular report), click View and highlight Individuals/Organizations.
- 2) Double-click on the entry that displays its own committee (this entry will appear in red).
- 3) Instruct the committee to input their FEC identification number directly under FEC ID and click OK.

This will correct the error message listed above and allow the committee to file their report, assuming no other serious problems exist in the report.

FECFile 4.0 Resolved Problems

The following is a list of FECFile problems that were resolved by February 14, 2001. These problems may cause discrepancies in reports filed at the beginning of 2001 due to the early shortcomings of the FECFile program. The analyst should make note of these problems, so as not to send any unnecessary letters.

- 1) On the H1, under State and Local Party Committees, the extra point would not check or calculate correctly.
- Selecting Direct Candidate Support would create a Schedule E rather than a Schedule F. Selecting a Schedule E, for Independent Expenditures would create a Schedule F.
- 3) Line 6(a), Column A, the cash on hand total, may disclose the cash on hand from the previous year if the Committee does not begin the new year with a new file.
- 4) Between the February Monthly and the July Monthly and on the Mid-Year Reports, FECFile would deduct only the federal share for debt payments on Schedule D, rather than the total amount disclosed on H4.

Validator Warning and Fail Messages Defined

Fail Messages

1. HDR record must be First in File

Usually means that the file is not in the proper format. Often it is a version 2 file being validated with a version 3 Validator. It is usually a private vendor's software, not an FECFile problem.

2. "Cover" (eg. F3A, F3XN, ...) must be 2nd in File

Usually means that the file is not in the proper format. Often it is a version 2 file being validated with a version 3 Validator. It is usually a private vendor's software, not a FECFile problem.

3. Filing must be an "FEC" Type of filing

Indicates the user is submitting a report that is not in the ".fec" format.

4. Filing must be in "FEC Version 4.0" Format

Indicates the user is using an old version of FECFile. The Committee will need to download a copy of the latest version of the software from the FEC's web page (http://www.fec.gov/elecfil/electron.html).

5. Invalid format. Superceded specification.

An amended report is given a code once filed at the FEC. In order to amend the report the Committee must use this number. It can be found on the Raw Data Page (http://herndon2.sdrdc.com/cgibin/dcdev/files/) and should be entered in the following format: FEC-12345.

Amended filing must have an "Amended Number"

Each amendment is numbered beginning with 1. If the same report is amended a second time, the amended number is 2. etc.

7. Header (HDR) inconsistent with Orig/Amend status

The Header indicates that the file has been amended but the form name of the report (F3N, F3A, F3XN, F3XA etc) does not.

•	,	•		
8.	Unrecognized form	Type/ Record Ignored		
The first field in a transaction indicates form type (F3X, SA11AI, SB17, etc.). This message indicates the use of an improper form type.				
9.	ID#	Not correct FEC Format		
	cates that the Comr 0XXXXX).	mittee is using a number that is not in the FEC ID format		
10.	ID #	Not same as Cover Page ID #		
Each transaction carries the committee ID and it must match the committee ID at the beginning of the report.				
11.	Schedule does not I	belong with Form		
Indi	cates the user is att	empting to file an invalid schedule with a particular form.		
12. Report Type is Missing or Invalid				
Indicates the user has either failed to enter the report type or is using a report type inconsistent with FEC report types.				
13.	(field) exceeds max	imum length of		
	cates the user has elicular field.	exceeded the maximum number of characters in a		
14.	{field} is Required, b	out field is Empty		
Indi	cates the user has f	failed to enter information in a particular field.		
15.	Multi-Form Filings	are NOT Allowed		

Each filing must consist of a single form (Form 3, Form 1, Form 6, etc...). The files cannot be bundled into one filing.

16. Extraneous data follows last field

Indicates a technical problem usually involving invalid characters. Only characters between ascii 22 and ascii 126 are acceptable.

17. Schedule H3(s) not Version 2.02 Format

Indicates the user is attempting to file an invalid schedule with a particular form.

18. Embedded double-quotes (") not allowed

Double quotes are used as part of the delimiter system. A comma-delimited file can be delimited by commas or by quotes and commas. Therefore, if you use "Dr.", "John Smith", "Jr", there is no problem. If "Dr.", "John "Big Boy" Smith", "Jr," is used, the quotes around "Big Boy" will confuse the system.

19. Leading Blanks {e.g. "Text"} not allowed

Data cannot begin with blanks. For example, [,123 White Street,] is OK, [, White Street,] is not.		123
20. Bad Date	_ not YYYYMMDD format	

Indicates the user has enter the date in an improper format.

21. _____ Not a Real Date or Outside 1960-2099

Indicates that the user has entered an invalid date or a date that does not fall between 1960 and 2099.

22. Invalid Amount format:

Indicates the amount is something other than numbers and decimals. Dollar signs and commas are not allowed.

23. Non-numeric data in Numeric Field

Indicates characters that are other than numbers entered into a field that should contain only numbers.	
24 is an Invalid Year (CCYY) Format	
Indicates the user has entered the year in an incorrect format.	
26. District "" is not 2-digit Numeric format	
Indicates the user has failed to enter the Congressional District as two digits.	
27. Tran ID is NOT UNIQUE - This one is same as other(s)	
Each transaction in an electronic filing (and all of its amendments) must have a unique transaction id.	
30. Event MUST be identified as [D]irect or [E]xempt	
Indicates the user has failed to specify an event as D (Direct Candidate Support) or E (Exempt).	
31. Event MUST be [A]dministrative [D]irect or [E]xempt	
Indicates the user has failed to specify an event as A (Administrative/Voter Drive), D (Direct Candidate Support) or E (Exempt).	
32. Invalid FEC CSV Version #	
Indicates the user has used an old version of the filing software.	
Warning Messages	
Conditionally Required field is empty	
Indicates the user has failed to enter data in a particular field.	
Subtotal {} not supported by other lines	

Summary amount should be the total of other lines on the summary, but is not (total contributions do not match all the contribution lines added together).
3. Subtotal {} not support by Schedule
Summary Page amount does not match the associated schedule amount.
4. FYI → {} accumulated on Schedule
If warning number 3 appears, this error is provided for the user's information.
5. Election Code invalid: {description}
Indicates that the user has failed to adequately indicate an election (primary, general, special or runoff) towards which a contribution was made.
6. Election Code missing: {description}
Indicates that the user has failed to indicate an election (primary, general, special or runoff) towards which a contribution was made.
7. Street Address is Missing
Indicates the street address for a particular entry is missing.
8. Single-line Address NOT in 1 st delimited field
Indicates that the user has entered a one-line address in the second address field.
9 not a valid 2-character USPS State Code
Indicates that the user has failed to enter the two digit state code.
10. Zip Code is invalid or Missing / Zip =
Indicates the user has failed to supply the zip code or has supplied too few or too many digits.

11. Invalid Area Code/Phone Number:
Indicates the user has entered a phone number containing too few or too many numbers.
12. Office Code "" Invalid (Valid Codes: H, S, P)
Indicates that the user has entered an office code that does not fit the format of H (House), S (Senate), or P (President).
13. Comm Code "" Invalid. (Valid: DM, TP, TM, O)
Indicates that a Form 7 (Report of Communication Costs) does not disclose the code for the type of communication in the category of DM (Direct Mail), TP (Telephone), TM (Telegram), or O (Other).
14. Comm Target "" Invalid. (Valid: E, S, M)
Indicates that a Form 7 (Report of Communication Costs) does not disclose the correct code for the class of recipient, in the category of E (Executive/Administrative Personnel), S (Stockholders), or M (Members).
15. Ratio Code "" Invalid (Valid Codes: N, R, S)
Indicates that the user has entered a ratio code that does not fit the format N (New), R (Revised), or S (Same).
16. Sup/Opp Code "" Invalid (Valid Codes: S, O)
Indicates that the user has entered a code that does not fit the format of S (Support) or O (Oppose) on Schedule E.
17. Committee Type "" is Invalid for this Form
Indicates that the user has entered an invalid committee type on Form 1.
18 not a valid 3-character Party Code

Indicates that the user has entered a code on Form 1 that does not correspond to a recognized political party.		
19 not a valid Party Type (NAT, STA, SUB)		
Indicates that the user has entered a code on Form 1 that does not fit the party type and format of NAT (National), STA (State), or SUB (Local).		
22. Value "" is Invalid for this Yes/No field		
Indicates that the user has entered something other than "yes" or "no" in a field that requires one of those responses.		
23. Value "" is Invalid for "Checkbox=X" field		
Indicates that the user has entered something other than a check in the checkbox.		
24. Point Value Subtotal is INCORRECT		
Indicates that the subtotal on Schedule H1 is incorrect.		
25. Schedule H1 contains Redundant Sections		
Indicates that the user has entered values under more than one method of allocation.		
26. Entity Type [] is not an acceptable value		
Indicates that the user has entered a name that is too long to completely appear on the public record.		
27. Delimited Name should not exceed 38 letters & spaces		
The name field is 38 characters including carat delimiters. (John^Smith^Jr)		
28. Name has Too Many Parts (Over 3 Delimiters Found)		
You can only use 3 carats in a name (Mr^John W^Smith^Jr is good. Mr^John^W^Smith^Jr is bad.).		

29. Schedule H3 Expenditure Item(s) don't match Total(s)

H3 transactions require one line for the admin total and as many lines as necessary for the other expenditure categories. If there are no others, it may be a single line. If the admin amount is zero, the admin line must be included anyway. This is an issue for programmers more than filers.

Error Codes

There is a long list of possible error codes that can be displayed in the validator. Most of these do not apply to FECFile, but are necessary to provide information to other programmers who support electronic filing. To correct an error, go to the transaction indicated by the error message, and make the necessary changes.

The Validator screen indicates if an error is a "Warning" or if it is a "Fail" error. A typical Validation error will appear like this:

Example 1:

Form (Item): SE24 (Johnson^Dave^^)

Field Name: #007 Payee City

Warning Conditionally Required Field is Empty

To understand what information this error is providing us, we begin by looking at the *Form (Item)*. This information helps you identify where the problematic transaction is located. In our example, the *Form (Item)* is SE24, which stands for Schedule E Line 24. The name on this particular line item will read Dave Johnson. We need to look for a Schedule E transaction with the name Dave Johnson.

The second step is to look at the *Field Name*. The *Field Name* tells us what part of the transaction is in error. In this case the *Field Name* reads, "Payee City" which tells us that there is an error in the field where the city is entered in for Dave Johnson's address.

The third step is to look at what the Warning description. In our example, the Warning reads, "Conditionally Required field is empty." This means we did not fill in the name of the city that Dave Johnson lives in, and we should go back and enter it now.

Example 2:

Form (Item): F3N

Field Name: #093 Treasurer's Signature Date

Fail is required but field is empty

First we look at the *Form (Item)*, which reads Form 3. Form 3 refers to our report in its entirety. **Note: This would read Form 3X if we were a PAC or Party Committee.** Therefore, we know the error is not related to a particular transaction, but to the report itself.

Second, we look at the Field Name, which reads "Treasurer's Signature Date." This refers to the date we "Closed" the report as we prepared to upload it. We reach the "Closed Date" screen, by right clicking on the *Reports View* and selecting *Close*.

Third, we see that we received a "Fail" message and that our description reads, "Is required but field is empty" which tells us we need to go back and enter in the date we closed the report.

The difference between a *Warning* and a **Fail** message is that reports containing only warnings may still be uploaded, while a report with a **Fail** message cannot be uploaded.

Errors that are *Warning* and those that are **Fail** are listed below.

FAIL Error Message

HDR record must be First in File
"Cover" (eg. F3A, F3XN,) must be 2nd in File
Filing must be an "FEC" Type of filing
Filing must be in "FEC Version 3.00" format
Amended filing must have an ID of the "Original"
Amended filing must have an "Amendment Number
Header (HDR) inconsistent with Orig/Amend status
Unrecognized Form Type / Record Ignored

ID# NOT Correct FEC Format

ID# NOT SAME AS Cover Page ID#
Schedule does not belong with Form
Report Type is Missing or Invalid
{field} exceeds maximum length of
(field) is Required, but field is Empty
Multi-Form Filings are NOT Allowed
Extraneous data follows last field
Schedule H3(s) not Version 2.02 format
Extraneous data coded in a Dummy field
Embedded double-quotes (") not allowed
Leading Blanks {e.g. " TEXT"} not allowed
Bad Date not YYYYMMDD format
Not a Real Date or Outside 1960-2099
Invalid Amount format:
Non-numeric data in Numeric Field
is an Invalid Year (CCYY) Format
Invalid Rate format:
Wrong Report Type for this Form
District "" is not 2-digit Numeric format
Tran ID is NOT UNIQUE - This one is same as other(s)

Back/Cross-Reference to Schedule/Tran ID not valid		
Back-Reference TRAN-ID does not match Sched TRAN-ID		
Event MUST be identified as [D]irect or [E]xempt		
Event MUST be [A]dministrative [D]irect or [E]xempt		
Amended Code must be A,C,D,N - not "_"		
Only Amended Code "A" allowed on New filings		
Warning Messages		
Conditionally Required field is Empty		
Subtotal {} not supported by other lines		
Subtotal {} not supported by Schedule		
FYI> {} accumulated on Schedule		
Election Code invalid: {description}		
Election Code missing: {description}		
Street Address is Missing		
Single-line Address NOT in 1st delimited field		
not a valid 2-character USPS State Code		
Zip Code is Invalid or Missing / Zip =		
Invalid Area Code/Phone Number:		
Office Code "_" Invalid (Valid Codes: H, S, P)		
Comm Code "" Invalid. (Valid: DM,TP,TM,G)		

Comm Target "_" Invalid. (Valid: E, S, M)
Ratio Code "_" Invalid (Valid Codes: N, R, S)
Sup/Opp Code "" Invalid (Valid Codes: S, O)
Committee Type "_" is Invalid for this form
not a valid 3-character Party Code
not a valid Party Type (NAT,STA,SUB)
Invalid Creditor (ICV,UCV,CAN,EMP,OTH)
not a Valid Itemized Transaction
Value "_" is Invalid for this Yes/No field
Value "_" is Invalid for "Checkbox=X" field
Point Value Subtotal is INCORRECT
Schedule H1 contains Redundant Sections
Entity Type [] is not an acceptable value
Delimited Name should not exceed 38 letters & spaces
Name has Too Many Parts (Over 3 Delimiters Found)
Schedule H3 Expenditure Item(s) don't match Total(s)